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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN



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THE
GROWING CHRISTIAN

OR,

The Development of the Spiritual Life

BY

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"THE WHITE LIFE," ETC.



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Preface

The following addresses were delivered at the Winona Lake, Benton Harbor (Mich.), Montreat (N. C.), and other Bible Conferences during the seasons of 1902 and 1903. They are sent out at the request of many who heard them and with the writer's prayer that the Holy Spirit may use them to glorify Christ. If you, my dear reader, only see Him more clearly and love Him more dearly because you have seen these pages it will have paid a thousand fold for the labor of producing them.

W. E. B.

Monticello, Ind.

TO

My Mother

WHOSE PRAYERS GAVE HER BOY TO GOD

AND

WHOSE LONG, UNTIRING DEVOTION

MADE POSSIBLE HIS PREPARATION FOR THE

GOSPEL MINISTRY,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Him by night and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, YE MUST BE BORN FROM ABOVE.—*Saint John's Gospel, Chapter Three.*

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"But grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

2 PETER 3:18.

The Growing Christian

or,

The Development of the Spiritual Life

THE LIFE IMPLANTED

"Ye must be born from above."—JOHN 3:7.

I COUNT it the worthiest ambition of the human soul—the desire to increase its capacity for God; to grow, and in growing to become more like God.

Paul in writing to the Thessalonians said, "We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." If you could translate that utterance out of the sphere in which it has its reference as uttered by Paul into any other sphere of life, you would find it the very thing that every man is trying to do. If a man has riches he wants more; if he has knowledge the very having it creates a thirst to have more; if he has skill he yearns to be still more accurate; if he is famous he would add another to his list of triumphs. But I think the saddest thing in the world is the nominal child of God altogether anxious about such increase and almost if not altogether indifferent about that spiritual increase which constitutes the true

wealth of this life and the sole wealth of the life to come.

When a man dies it is usually asked, "How much was he worth?" and the answer comes in dollars. But that's a false estimate. Neither in life nor in death will you or I be worth any more than the measure of our growth in grace. Dear child, you are looking for success; you have a hunger for knowledge; possibly a longing for wealth; but when the ocean of eternity shall break upon these sands of time, though you have the laurel wreath upon your brow and millions of shining gold at your feet, if the path along which you have come is but the long reminder of wasted hours for cultivating the acquaintance of God, and through the knowledge of Him to become like Him, you will be a great deal poorer and more unsuccessful than God ever intended you should be. I would that God might create within us as we go along a keen realization of the importance of growing in grace and a deep hungering and thirsting after righteousness, so that while we are growing in stature and increasing in knowledge we may become large in soul, having a mind to appreciate and a heart to love and a will to do the things of God.

Peter tells us to "grow in grace," but there must first be life before there can be growth. This is as true in the spiritual world as it is in the natural. Science with all its defining has never been able to define life. Formerly there were two great schools of science, one teaching that "life can spring into being of itself,"—a theory known as Spontaneous Generation; the other holding that life can only come from pre-existing life. You can hardly find a respectable scientist to-day who will lend his name to the former view. Evolution is forced to begin with life. The evolutionist thinks he has found his way back in material to the primordial germ, but where life came from he confesses he has never been able to find out. Here at least the hand of God seems to have written, "Thus far and no farther." How life originated, Mr. Darwin designates "a hopeless inquiry."

Now an exact parallel to this is found in the spiritual world. That a man must be born again before he can enter the kingdom of God is a scientific necessity.

Do you remember the story of the young artist who had wrought so long upon an angel statue and concealed himself to hear what the master Angelo would say about it?—when he

heard the master say, "It only lacks one thing," so near broken hearted did he become that he could neither eat nor sleep, until one in deep concern for him made his way to Angelo's studio to inquire what it was the statue lacked, and the great artist said, "Man, it lacks only life! If it had life it would be as perfect as God Himself could make it."

Many people honestly fail to understand this. They cannot see the difference between a man's morality and a Christian's righteousness. Why a moral man should not simply grow better and better until he is good enough to enter the kingdom of God they honestly fail to see, but it's the difference between a lifeless statue and a living soul. The difference between a man's morality and a Christian's goodness is not one of quantity but of quality. To make this plainer, let us enter into the sphere of natural things. If I should ask you why a tree could not keep on growing and growing until it became an animal, you could see in an instant why a merely moral man cannot grow into the goodness that pleases God. To draw a closer distinction: if one should ask why the sour crab cannot keep on growing and developing until its yield becomes the luscious golden fruit of

the russet, he would have a perfectly intelligent answer to the question perplexing so many people. It's a difference in generation and therefore in the kind of life that grows, and thus we see that the impassable gulf between the different kinds of life in the natural world has its exact parallel in the spiritual sphere in the barrier between the natural and the supernatural life as set forth by the Word of God. In the natural world, that passage, if ever effected, must be by the impartation of life from the higher to the lower; so in the spiritual world in order to a spiritual development there must first be the implanting of a spiritual life. This is what Jesus calls being "born from above," or as the authorized version has it, "born again." And so before we speak about growing we must be sure we are born.

And now I can almost hear some one saying, "What does it mean to be born again, and how did I ever come to have this new life, and if I have it not, how can I get it?" Well, the new birth is a profound mystery—but not one whit more mysterious to the theologian than the first birth is to the physiologist. Æsop tells us of a hen that laid golden eggs, but a *really* wise man would be no more surprised to see a hen

lay a golden egg and that egg hatch into a young alligator than he is to see a tiny acorn produce a mighty acre-covering oak, so far as his ability goes to explain either the one or the other. There are some things that really smart men do not know. "A religion without mystery is an absurdity."

But let us look for a few moments at the matter in question, the initial fact of divine experience. The great difference between man and animal is that to man was given the additional gift of a spirit that makes him a moral being and endows him with immortality. Now let us suppose a seed which we intend to plant. We are accustomed to say that within the seed is the germ of life. We might call that germ, whatever it is, the spirit of the seed, although it is not immortal and if it is not cared for it will perish forever. Only, however, when that seed is planted and comes into correspondence with certain environments does it really begin to live, for in that correspondence the spirit of nature knocks at the door of the seed and says, "May I come in?" and entering in, somehow, through some mysterious touch not given man to understand, life is generated within the waiting spirit of the seed.

Now I know that some astute theologian might venture an objection here, because man is said to be dead in trespasses and in sins. But so is the seed dead. Man of himself can do nothing; what more can the seed do? What more helpless and hopeless thing can you imagine than a shrivelled seed lying on the shelf? Apart from the spirit of nature, the spirit within the seed, whatever it may be, never will live, and apart from the Spirit of God the spirit of man is doomed to an eternal death because it cannot generate one spark of life for itself. Analogy usually breaks down somewhere, but the point of comparison here is that *the life-giving power, both in the seed and in the man comes from without.*

But lest some one should protest that the seed has within it the principle of life while man has not, let us look beyond the point of the analogy just mentioned. Where did the seed get that germ or that principle of life? We say that God put it there and the scientist must admit as much or at least confess he does not know. So too must the spiritual life come from God if man is ever to possess it. We will begin therefore as far back as possible. We read that "God created man in His own

image, in His own image created He him." What was this image? Not physical, for God is not such. Not spiritual, for the Devil is a spiritual being. Nor can we hardly say it is psychical,—I mean giving him the power to think, to will and to love, for I am not so sure, indeed I think we must admit, that animals do these things; at least the Devil does, possibly with the exception of loving. But in His moral image I think we must take it; that is, man became in the very beginning the temple of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit entered into him, whereby his understanding was enlightened above all things else to know God, the will inclined to do the will of God, and the affections purified to love the things of God. Then came the temptation and man fell, and that which had been the temple of God went to ruin because the Holy Spirit who dwelt in it was under the painful necessity of leaving the polluted spot. Then followed the descent of a ruined race and every son of Adam has been born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and until man's nature is renewed by the restoration of the Holy Spirit; not only is his mind, his will and his affections alienated from God, but Scripture is very express in stating his utter

inability to do the things which are right. "Cannot" is the word used concerning him. As to his understanding, he cannot know the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14); as to his will, he cannot be subject to the law of God (Rom. 8:7); as to his affection, he cannot love God (same verse), and as to his life, he cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). Upon his utter lack, therefore, of spiritual life and his utter inability to do anything for himself is grounded the necessity for the new birth, which means the restoration of the moral image of God by the re-incoming of the Spirit of God. "Verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again (except he have the new life imparted to him from above) he cannot see the kingdom of God." He lacks the essential condition for seeing it. As well try to think with his foot or to love with his hand as to appreciate the things of God so as to do them without being born from above. The nature which a man gets at his first birth is human; the nature which he gets at his second birth is divine. The one is the Adam nature, the other is the Christ nature, and by no course of education, by no kind of ethical culture, by no process of evolution, can the natural man be made into the spiritual. It

is scientifically impossible. *Ye must be born again.* The Spirit of God must come and bring spiritual life with Him, and when *He* has come in only then does a man become a spiritual being in the highest sense of spirituality.

Dear friend, before we go on to speak of growth would it not be well to pause long enough to ask, "Have I the life from which a growth in grace can really spring, or have I been finding satisfaction in a character wrought by human workmanship rather than produced by the Spirit of God?" Some one has said, "One birth, two deaths; two births, one death." Have you been born the second time? Have you really and sincerely come to God and told Him that He could have His way with you? If you have, then you may trust God for the regeneration and not worry about it.

Then Paul tells us that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Have you such a witness? Dear friend, if you are walking in newness of life and trying to keep yourself unspotted from the world you will not be without the witness of the Spirit. If He does nothing more, He will say to you every moment you stop to listen,

"You have taken God at His word and God will never fail you."

But some one wants to know if there are not certain effects of the new birth which can help us to an assurance such as we fain would have? Yes, there are such effects, and while they become more and more manifest as one grows in grace they are in evidence from the very hour of regeneration. These results come in the most natural direction. If I should ask you to mention for me the faculties of your soul, you would say, "I have a mind with which to think; I have a will with which to choose and I have a heart with which to love," and further than this you would not be able to go. Now it is exactly upon these faculties the Holy Spirit operates when He regenerates. He illumines the understanding; He renews the will; He purifies the affection.

What about your understanding? Does it appreciate the things of God? "I don't see what you find in that picture to hold your attention so long," said one friend to another. "Don't you wish you could?" replied the other. The last man had within him the spirit of an artist. There was an attractiveness in the picture appealing to something

within his soul. Let us test ourselves by this principle.

1. The Word of God. Does it mean anything to you or is it a dull and uninteresting book? We find it written within that a real Christian will feed upon the Word and it will be as manna to his soul, but when you perchance have tasted of it you have found yourself altogether without an appetite for such nourishment. It took such a hold upon one person that he said he would meditate on it day and night, but his eyes had been opened that he might behold wonderful things as he read.

2. What about Prayer? Has it any meaning for you? When you hear people singing about the "Sweet hour of Prayer," do you find yourself wondering what they mean? Possibly you thought once you would pray, but you heard no sweet whispering of the divine voice and the God, in whom of course everyone believes, seemed too far away to hear, or too unconcerned, for ought you knew, to care if He had heard.

3. What about the voice of nature? To the regenerate person Paul says "all things have become new." A man who had recently given himself to Christ was walking through the

garden with a friend and plucking a flower from its stem said, "Isn't it beautiful; I never knew how beautiful a flower was until I gave myself to Christ." There's a volume of meaning in that. Things do look and are more beautiful to a Christian because he knows that although the blessings of Providence are over the good and bad alike, it is all for Christ's sake and in everything round about him he has a continual vision of his Lord.

I am not going to take upon myself the responsibility of unchristianizing anybody; the very appreciation, whose lack we have been deploring, is itself a thing of growth. But if you are an utter stranger to these things or the appetite for them, I wonder if we must not look for the reason in the words of Paul where he says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

They have pictured to us a girl, blind and deaf, placed upon a tower-top and touching the world about her only through the soles of her feet and the breezes that kissed her cheek; and then from the throne of God came an angel and touching those sightless eyes and soundless ears cried, "Daughter, see! Daughter,

hear!" and instantly there flowed into her soul through the open eyes and ears the myriad sights and sounds of a world all new. "Old things," says Paul, "have passed away; all things have become new. Something like that is the experience when by His Spirit is first revealed the Son of God to man. Friend, you need not be brilliant in mind to have the eyes of your understanding opened, but if you are willing that the Spirit of God shall have His way with you, there will come to you such an appreciation of Christ as shall seem like the creation of a new faculty within your soul, whereby you shall see and hear and understand things which the eye and ear and heart of the natural man hath never known.

And now a word about the other powers of the soul. We spoke about the will; what about yours? It gives you the power to choose, but what about your choices? Whose pleasure and whose glory do you consult in the choices you make? Have you ever known what it means to do a thing for Christ's sake, or are you continually seeking to please yourself? Have you a wrong passion which your will is powerless to conquer? Are you weak in the hour of temptation?

Bishop Taylor told us of a black man, recently converted, who was kneeling at the altar for communion, and presently the Bishop saw him looking intently and wildly at the man by his side and then in great agitation he arose and fled into the forest. Presently he came back and quietly taking his place at the altar, finished the communion, eating from the same loaf and drinking from the same cup with the man from whose presence he had just fled. After the service Bishop Taylor inquired the cause of his strange conduct, and the man told him that in the one by his side he recognized the one who had long ago slain his father and that he had sworn a great oath of revenge. But in the meantime he had been converted, yet when he saw the man there he remembered the murder and his oath and the old hatred awoke within him, and so great was the temptation that came upon him that it drove him out into the wilderness where the Evil One assailed him, but upon his knees he conquered through the power of a will renewed by the Spirit of God. Do you have victory or do you have continual defeat?

And now briefly a question about your affections. "Where your treasure is there will your

heart be also." A wardrobe is a poor prison for an immortal spirit. It could find nothing to wear there if summoned suddenly into the presence of God. It would be sad to lose your heart and find it in the vault, hard and yellow like the gold upon which it is set; to discover it living, or rather dying, upon the vitiated atmosphere of the dancing room, but in just such places will it be if such are the things that are dear to it. But not only does the one who has passed from death unto life turn from the sinful and the vile and become enamored of that which is pure and holy, but he begins to see things in their true relation and to seek above all things else for the treasure that is neither corrupted by moth nor stolen by thieves.

And then you know that John says, "We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." The Christian finds his heart going out to all his fellowmen, but first, of course, and in a more intimate sense, to the children of God. I know of no surer sign of the unregenerate condition than that one's heart should feel no stronger attraction for a Christian than for one who has not crowned the Christian's Christ in his heart.

This is doubtless the primary reference of the word "brethren." But the Christian does not stop with this. His sympathy has a wider reach. He will have a concern for the unsaved. Mr. Morgan tells of two men, nominal Christians, who worked side by side for five years before finding out, either of them, that the other had ever made a profession of religion. One of them, in telling this to Mr. Morgan, said, "Wasn't it funny?" "Funny!" said Mr. Morgan, "why no; go find the man and let us get down before God; you never have been born again." I am judging no one, but surely if one has the life of God within him it ought not take the world five years to find it out.

I know these remarks are calculated to make us feel uncomfortable, yet nothing that any man might say could ever bring such a feeling to him who is trusting in Christ and has the witness of the Spirit within himself. Nor must we forget what was said a moment ago—that these very graces are the things in which we grow and may not in the first hours of Christian experience be so much in evidence, but if you are forced to feel as you read, that your experience has been destitute of them all, then I pray you to ask God for a vision of

yourself; and then ask Him for a vision of Himself and beseech Him to stamp His image upon you.

When God was about to make man He called to Him His three ministering angels and turning to the first said, "Justice, shall we make man?" and Justice said, "Make him not, oh God, for he will trample on Thy laws." Then said God to the second, "Truth, shall we make man?" and Truth said, "Oh, God, make him not, for he will pollute Thy sanctuaries." Then said God, turning to the third, "Mercy, shall we make man?" and Mercy, dropping on her knees and looking up through her tears, said, "Oh, God, make him, and I will watch over him with my care and follow him in all the dark paths he will have to tread." Then God made man in His own image and said, "Oh, man, thou art the child of Mercy. Go." Unbelieving one, thou art the child of mercy! How good mercy has been to you!—sending you the only Son of God to atone for your sin, following you in your sin, whispering of forgiveness and wooing you, if possible, back to heaven. Let us draw back the bolts of our wills now and He who stands without with the gift of life will open the door and enter in, and

thus having life we will grow in His grace and in the knowledge of Him, and thus growing become like Him whom we shall some day see face to face. God grant it!

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD, HOW THEY GROW; *they toil not neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."*—St. Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6.

HOW TO GROW

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."
—MATT. 6:28.

I BELIEVE with Browning that "Man was made to grow, not stop." Greater men than Browning evidently believed in this too, for we hear Paul declaring that "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son"—to grow into His likeness. He tells the Colossians that he only wished they might know how he had prayed for them that they might be well rooted and grounded, and to the Thessalonians he said, "Brethren, we beseech you that you increase more and more." And Peter, likewise, in more places than one, leaves with the people the same injunction. We have spent a little time in studying the life as implanted; let us now spend a little in seeing how it grows.

If you are sighing to-day for the "joy which once you knew when first you found the Lord," it is because you have not been a growing Christian. Conversion is only the beginning of what God can do for a human soul.

"Have you on the Lord believed?
Still there's more to follow;
Of His grace have you received?
Still there's more to follow.
More and more, more and more,
Always more to follow;
Oh, His matchless, boundless love!—
Still there's more to follow."

"For He is able to do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think," and we may "increase more and more" and "grow in grace" until the measure of our stature shall be something like the fullness of His own.

I want God to do for me all that He can do for any man in this life. I know I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness, but I do not want to be satisfied here with anything less than the nearest likeness to Him that any man can bear. If there are deep things of God which can only be searched by His Spirit, then I want His Spirit to lead me into the knowledge of the deepest truth; if there are mountain top experiences from which I can come, like His servant of old, with my face shining with the presence of God, I want to go up into the mountain; if down in the valley there are trials and afflictions from which I may come up

with my soul chastened, and be more meek and lowly, more tender and sympathetic, and more like the Man of Sorrows, I want to go down into the valley; if there are conditions which if fulfilled will bring a power from God that can give me victory over sin and can make and keep my life pure and spotless and holy, I want to fulfill the conditions and receive that power.

"More like my Saviour would I grow,
More of His grace to others show;
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me."

Science recognizes what is known as a "balance of life," a condition of life where there is neither growth nor retrogression; but such a state of equilibrium is really foreign to organic things save in theory, and what seems to be such a balance is really a painfully slow progression, or what is more likely an equally slow retrogression. Where there is life there must be either growth or decay. Peter seems to have had this in mind in his epistle. He had been telling them of a day of testing which was to come and then warned them lest they should fall from their steadfastness, adding immediately thereunto, "But grow in grace." For

them it was either to fall from their steadfastness or to grow in grace. There is no standing still, and if the life of the soul is to be what God would have it be it must be one of continual progress in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Most people have recognized the infinite desirability of being good. It was Huxley who said that if some great power would agree to make him always think what is good and do what is right on condition of being turned into a sort of a clock and wound up every morning he would instantly close with the offer. Well, there is a way, and that without being turned into a sort of a clock or any other machine; it is to become good just as a lily becomes beautiful. But alas! for the number who are trying some other method, but you can always hear the rattle of the wheels and the din of the machinery. Suppose we mention a few of these man-contrived methods.

1. One is *Resolution.* I will resolve and therefore be good. But a man might as well try to lift himself by pulling at his bootstraps. A good resolution is nothing more than a fit of sporadic earnestness, and while they are a good kind of fits for every man to have they can

never make a man really good. Suppose the little lad who always wants to be a man resolves some day that he will get big, can he by any thought whatever add one cubit to his stature? The Master said, No. This is the usual method of the unregenerate, but the really sorrowful thing is that so many Christians are trusting in it too. I warrant that all of us have over and over again resolved and then failed at the very point of our resolution. We forget that the very thing we resolve to become would be the easy and natural outcome if God's way had the supremacy instead of our own.

2. Another method we might call *Eradication*. Dealing with one sin at a time. If too difficult to wholly abandon at once, I will do so by degrees and when this one has been eradicated I will turn my attention to another. The trouble with this theory is that most of us have so many sins that we'd die before we got half way through, and if we did get through we'd be a dwarf anyhow, for we've added nothing however much we 've taken away. But the chief difficulty is this: we used the word eradication, but that is exactly what does not occur. The root of the sin is still there and when we

think we have conquered one and turned our attention to another, the first puts on new strength and marks the point of another defeat.

3. The third method is that of *Imitation.* I will copy the virtues of the good and so become like them. But most of us are very poor hands at imitation, and at best such an art only yields an artificial product and people can always tell the difference. Titian was a good imitator but he never became great till he left his master's models and getting close up to nature's heart allowed her to breathe her inspiration into his soul. Mr. Meyer was one time traveling by the side of a young man who was reading Thomas A. Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, and noticing the book said, "A grand book." "Yes," was the reply. "I have found something better," said Mr. Meyer. "Better?" "Yes, better for me," said Mr. Meyer. "I was never a very good hand at imitating." He said when the master gave him a drawing to copy at school his imitation needed always to have a statement written beneath to let one know for what it was intended. But said he: "My young friend, if my drawing master could have infused the spirit of his skill into my brain and

hand, he could have drawn through me as fair a drawing as his own. And if instead of imitating Christ far away in glory He will come by the Holy Spirit and dwell in me, by His grace He shall work through my poor-yielded life a life something like His own fair life."

Ah, friends, now we are getting back to where we started; there's a better way to be good than these we've been considering—in fact, the only way to be really good. If we can say, like Paul, "Christ liveth in me," why not let the Christ-life develop within us? "He that hath the Son hath life," and having studied the life as implanted let us now "consider the lilies, how they grow." For I am sure if we can learn the lesson of the lily, our life instead of being a series of dismal disappointments and heart-rending failures, will rise into the beauty of holiness even as the sweet flower of which we speak rises from the garden of its God into its more than Solomon-like glory.

Three things present themselves at this point:

1. The mysteriousness of growth. It is not the process the Master would have us contemplate, for this we never could understand, and in order to grow it is not necessary to know

how to grow. No scientist understands *how* the lily grows. It is so with the growth of character. If yours is a manufactured goodness, like other artificial things, it will not be hard to explain; if it is the fruit of an inner growing life, the child of God may appreciate it, but God alone can understand it.

2. The lily does not try to grow. Of course that were an impossibility for an unconscious thing, but it's just as true of your life and mine, both in the physical and the spiritual sphere. This is the lesson Christ meant to enforce. No amount of anxiety or worry or thought will add one cubit to our stature or perfect one grace within our soul. The Christian's life is to be a composed life. Growth really *takes place;* if there is life and health in the body growth is not only natural but inevitable; it is so with the soul, and where there is health of the soul the life within the soul will unfold itself as naturally as the lily from its bud.

3. There is, however, a certain condition of health and it is to this the Christian is to turn his attention, and as he does so he will discover that the growing will take care of itself or rather God will take care of it, for He it is

after all who *does* the growing. Certainly if we are to be healthy we must have the proper diet. The reason we have so many puny Christians is the want of proper nourishment.

It has become the custom, and really a divine one, to give the poor children of the city a few weeks' outing in the country. A handful of them were once taken to a farm house and a rare treat for them it was indeed. The mother of the home noticed that one little fellow did not drink his milk, and she asked him why. And he said, "I ain't got no milk." "Why, yes," she said, "Johnny, that's your milk right by your plate." And the little fellow said, "That ain't milk; milk's blue." He had been living on watered milk down in the city and almost the hardest trial that ever came into his life was when he had to leave the fresh, creamy drink at the farm house and go back to the doctored milk of the city. Too many Christians are living on blue milk, and is it any wonder there is so much stunted growth among us? There's rich food that God's prepared; it brings health and a relish to those who try it.

The Christian's nourishment comes to him through certain channels and to these now for a brief time let us turn our attention. If we

were asked, What are these channels,—these means of grace? we would almost recite them in concert, so apparent are they as the chief source of spiritual strength. To carry on the analogy, we might liken these means of grace to the lily's roots, each of which, as well as every feeler, has its own little mouth through which passes the heat and moisture of the soil on their way to strengthen the growing plant above. There are more of these roots than we shall mention, but the ones you are expecting to be mentioned are three:

1. The first is the *Word of God.* Peter says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." Whatever else that means, it means that the Word of God is a good thing to feed on. It's too bad that so many people seem to have misunderstood Peter. Milk, you know, is food which has passed through the digestion of another, and so there are some who think that about all the feeding they need is what the minister hands out to them on Sunday morning. I refer to these bottle Christians who use their pastor as a nurse. How strange that so many Christians should be satisfied with a nourishment like that! Whatever else Peter meant he

didn't mean that by the sincere milk of the Word. How sad it is and yet how true that the majority of Christians are not students of the Bible. In some homes it is only an ornament for the center table or a family record to tell when the old folks were married and when brother died and sister was born. There are thousands of nominal Christians who can tell you the number of cards in a eucher deck but couldn't tell the number of books in the Bible to save their lives. Not that there is any particular merit in this latter, but that it is sad indeed that anyone called by the name of Christ should know so much about the one and so little about the other. What growth can you expect in such a soul? They are indeed like the rich farmer who had his barns stored with corn and said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods, eat, drink and be merry." Trying to feed his soul on corn. A neglected Bible means a starved and puny spirit, a dwarfed soul and a barren life. Jesus in His priestly prayer for you and me said to the Father, "Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy word is truth." What does this mean but that the Word is the chief instrument in our sanctification? It is from the Word that the

Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us and thus only can we come to know the living Word through a thorough acquaintance with the Word which is written, and that is what sanctification means—to know Christ.

And how shall I read the Word.

(1) First of all, *Prayerfully.* That the Holy Spirit may be your interpreter and that you may have that spirit which will cause you to believe every word of it as God's message for you.

(2) Frequently. More especially in stated and uninterrupted seasons. To be healthy and growing one must be regular in his diet.

(3) Carefully. Reading the Bible every day simply for the sake of regularity is of little value; as if such a perfunctory performance were to act as a charm about us during the day! Such people might save even the little time required by securing a minature Bible to hang about their necks. One cold morning as Miss Havergal was about her daily Bible study, her sister besought her to read with her feet more comfortably to the fire. "But then, Marie," said the saintly invalid, "I can't rule my lines so neatly; just see what a find I've

got." She was in the habit of marking her Bible, which is most excellent; but when one studies it as she did there will be no need to mark the place where you stop that you may know where to begin next time. That's the way Mr. Moody used to hoe potatoes when a boy, so he said, and that's the way many people read their Bibles. It seems as though God has purposely hidden the treasures of His Word, some of them deep, and others at least a little underneath the surface, as if to test our earnestness in searching for them and to insure a keener appreciation and a profounder joy when once we have brought them to light. What a wonderful book it is!

"Were all the seas one chrysolite,
The earth a golden ball,
And diamonds all the stars of night,
This book were worth them all!"

To studiously and carefully pore over its pages is like eating meat at the King's table. Dear child of God, are you neglecting this Word or are you feeding upon it? I am sure if you can say with the prophet, "Thy words were found and I did eat them," that you can also say with him, "And Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." "I

will answer for it," said Romaine, "the longer you read the Bible the more you will like it—it will grow sweeter and sweeter; and the more you get into the spirit of it the more you will get into the Spirit of Christ."

2. The second condition of growth, or root rather, through which the soul is to be fed is *Secret Prayer*. And by secret prayer is meant rather the occasion of deliberate approach, when in our closet, as Andrew Murray says, "we are shut out from men and shut in with God"; this rather than breathing the atmosphere of constant communion, this rather than praying without ceasing, is what is meant by secret prayer. The two are not, of course, to be vitally severed. They really animate and feed each other and are the complements in the life of perfect fellowship. How blessed so to breathe the atmosphere of prayer that anywhere and everywhere the soul will cast quick glances at its ever present Lord; glances which speak to Him in adoration, in love, in petition and reliance; to have such constant fellowship that even the smallest details of our lives will not be too insignificant to mention to Him. But I very much fear that one who thus expects to commune without the more stated seasons of

private prayer will find himself forgetting his privilege in the busy rush of life, and certainly there could be no better preparation for such a day's communion than to begin that day with a season of quiet interview with Him whom we desire to go with us to our daily duty.

In Hosea 14:5 we hear the Lord saying, "I will be as the dew unto Israel and Israel shall grow up as the lily." The dew, it is said, falls or gathers only when the atmosphere is still, and so the heavenly refreshing comes best in the quiet of communion with our God. When the Psalmist said, "Evening, morning and noon will I pray," he used a word that means "to muse," "to meditate," and its Greek equivalent carries with it the idea of "narrating fully," and so when we have gotten alone with God and told Him all about it we hear the sweet whisper of His approval, or of His forgiveness and receive His all-sufficient grace, and no wonder we become strong. Tell Him all about it? All about what? All about everything. All about your sin? Yes, He'll forgive. All about your temptation? Yes, He'll strengthen you to overcome. All about your failure? Yes, He'll help you to succeed. All about your sickness? Yes, He'll heal your

disease. All about your joys? Yes, He wants to share your happiness. That's what real fellowship means, a sharing with each other of every concern.

"Oh, the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend;
When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God,
I commune as friend with friend."

We don't need to dwell upon the fact that such communion is conducive to growth in grace. The delight of it seems to make us forget all about the growing and it is good that it should, for it is not by "taking thought" that we grow.

3. And now just a word about the other root or channel of grace. It is *Exercise*, of course. The idle arm grows weak; the unused faculty atrophies. Brother Lawrence, who taught us so much about practicing the presence of God, was a very good man, but he lost half of his saintliness when he made up his mind to live as if there were nobody else but God and Brother Lawrence in the world. The monk in Longfellow's "Legend Beautiful" wanted to tarry in his cell in communion with his Lord, but God told him to go out and feed the beggars.

"Should he who, wrapped in silent ecstasy
Of divinest self-surrender,—
Should he slight his radiant guest,
Slight this vision celestial, for a crowd of ragged,
Bestial beggars at the convent gate?"

And God said:

"Do thy duty, that is best;
Leave unto the Lord the rest,"

and when he came back the divine visitor said he would not have stayed had the monk refused to go. Here the thought comes out again, If we will but obey His voice we can leave the rest to Him. He will attend to the growth and we would find ourselves growing more rapidly if we thought less about character and more about duty. If we thought less about being somebody and more about doing something for somebody, we would come nearer being the body the Lord wants us to be.

Dear child of God, are you growing? Have you got a larger heart and a purer spirit than you had last year? Are you living nearer the Master now than then? Is your delight in the law of the Lord and are you meditating therein day and night? Are you taking time to be holy while the world rushes on? Are you saying each morning, "What can I do to-day for

Christ?" We have been considering the lilies, how they grow. Let us then say: "My life too shall be one of growth, until like the lily's pure and unstained calyx the beauty of holiness shall crown it." And while the lily dies we shall go on from beauty unto beauty and from glory unto glory, for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

"*The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in impurity and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,* AND MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, *to fulfil the lusts thereof.*"
—St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 13.

HOW NOT TO GROW

"Make no provision for the flesh."—Rom. 13:14.

WE HAVE been considering the lilies of the field, how they grow; we have discovered that there is a law of growth, and the same law—a continuity of the law, the scientist would say—in both the natural and spiritual world; we have dwelt briefly upon some of the conditions of Christian growth and I wonder if it wouldn't be well now for a while to consider the Christian, *how he does not grow.*

When a plant is once supplied with the proper means of nourishment the chief concern of the horticulturist is not an endeavor to make it grow—in fact, such is not his business at all—but it is to see that all obstacles to growth are taken out of the way and everything eradicated that would in any way hinder growth, thus making it possible for the plant to come to perfection in its own time and way. Every living thing, in the natural world, to thrive must be fed. This is true of plant life and it is true of animal life. If it is not fed it will die.

In fact it will die anyhow. Plant and animal life at the most is but ephemeral. The wiseacres tell us they have all but discovered eternal life such as may endure with us in the body. Yes, "all but," but who'd want such an eternal life if they did find it? We are wont to say, in fact we said it in the previous message, that if the proper environment be furnished it is natural for living organisms to live and grow; without controverting anything we there said, we now intend to state what after all is really true, that in spite of such nourishment it is natural for such organism to deteriorate and die. As another has said, "We are wont to imagine that nature is full of life; in reality it is full of death." Man with all his strength is but a frail and daily dying creature.

But there is something else in man besides the material. To him of all creatures was given the privilege, yea, rather the necessity of living forever, in the sense of existence. This belongs to the spiritual nature of every man. Because he is a spiritual being, he must go on, either in heaven or in hell. This spiritual nature is by generation sinful. "Man is born in sin and shapen in iniquity." He enters life with the sinful principle as sole controller of his

being. This nature we are accustomed to say has a deathward tendency. This is true, but in a sense only,—unless regenerate, it involves the soul in spiritual and eternal death, but even in the lost world that nature itself is very much alive indeed. We speak, as does the Scriptures, of the *unregenerate* as being dead; and *they are* dead—"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth"—although it is important to notice that Scripture nowhere teaches that *the spiritual nature* as just conceived is *ever* dead in any man's life, save the believer's in glory. You say, "How are you using that word, spiritual?" In the sense now that all people, even the devil, are spiritual beings. In fact, the biggest evidence that an unregenerate man *is* dead is the liveliness of his wicked spiritual nature.

This nature Paul calls the "old man." This suggests the question of the new man. The new man is Christ, and when in regeneration the new man enters, He brings His nature with Him and of course another kind of life. "He that hath the Son hath life." Every child of God has therefore two natures, an old human nature and a new divine nature.

Does regeneration mean a changed nature?

Yes, if by nature is meant the individual, for the Christian is most certainly a changed man; but the matter will appear much simpler if we adhere to the Scriptural representation, which seems to be, not that of a changed but of an added nature. Peter tells us in his second epistle, the first chapter and fourth verse, that we have been "made partakers of the divine nature."

I have been pained to read in a religious journal that reaches more young people than any other in the world, words like these:

"What a glorious change from the old life into the new! 'former things have passed away'; the old nature with its cravings and its power is gone, for with the new birth comes a new nature and he who has experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is dead to the old nature just as the butterfly is dead to the grub nature that ruled it when a catapillar."

That is not true, and many a child of God has found himself many times in doubt and real distress because he has failed to appreciate the real truth of the matter. Thinking either that regeneration meant instantaneous death to the old nature, or that a change was then begun

that meant a speedy eradication of that nature, he is surprised to find it manifesting itself with its old lustings after evil when he thought it dead and gone, and unsuspectingly he yields himself to the subtle whispering of the evil one that he never was born again, and discouraged abandons himself to sin or seeks another regeneration, merely to go through the same experience, unhappy himself and a hindrance to others by his weak and Christ-dishonoring life. The truth is, the old man continues to breathe; nor does he sign a quit claim to the soul when the new man enters, but a lively spiritual conflict ensues which continues with some degree of intensity, I am inclined to think—it does with me—is the testimony of Scripture and experience, until He shall come in glory to "change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). What we need is to put on the whole armor of God and keep it on and keep the old man under, as Paul did, through the all-conquering strength of the new man, and thank God for a victory that's easy when we do.

You now see the difference between life in the natural world and in the spiritual—the one is bound to die; the other is bound to live, and

yet in a sense the law of death is universal, for even in the spiritual world the liveliness of the old man is but the sign of a death more real than any the natural world ever knew.

In order to become thoroughly acquainted with the old nature, that we may recognize it and be on our guard against it, it might be well to see by what other names it is called. Paul, we have seen, calls it the "old man." We also read of it as the "natural man," "the flesh," and Paul identifies the flesh with himself. He says, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). "Flesh," says Mr. Meyer, "is Me-ism." Flesh, as used by Paul, is the element of self in a man, the sinful human nature, and not the material element of the human body. It is the self-life, the carnal life. This, it has been noted, inheres in the child of God as well as in the unregenerate, and alas! in some of His children it predominates over the Christ-life, robs the soul of its beauty, and becomes to them the cause of much sorrow and spiritual darkness.

Now you will notice that while Paul calls this element the "natural man," he speaks of the new or divine nature as the spiritual, and

while bearing in mind the previous discussion and remembering that all men and demons even are spiritual beings, it will be best hereafter to observe Paul's distinction, for in a very distinct sense he only is spiritual who has the Spirit of God indwelling and filling him.

Now we have already seen that life, in order to growth, must be nourished. Each nature craves its own peculiar diet. I stood in a dark cellar the other day where some potatoes had been poured upon the floor, and although old and shriveled the life was still there and across the floor during a portion of the day the sun threw a heavy ray of its life-giving light and every sprout was creeping in that direction to bathe itself in its life-giving element.

A luxuriant growth or a healthy organ is conditioned wholly by a correspondence with proper environment. Do you want the Christ-life, the new man, to flourish? We have seen some of the conditions of such growth. Or do you want the self-life, the old man, to thrive? Then simply see that his appetites are satisfied. But let us see what Paul says about it. In the 13th chapter of Romans and the 14th verse he says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and *make no provision for the flesh*, to fulfill the lusts

thereof." The old man is a determined character and purposes to control the reins of every believer's being and Paul seems to be clearly decided that there is but one avenue of escape, one preventive against the successes of his undertaking, and that is *starvation*. "Make no provision for the flesh to gratify the appetites thereof." In the original, that means, "If you know what he likes, don't give him any of it." Is it any wonder we have so many dwarfs in the Christian life, people who have passed from death unto life and then have left the spiritual nature to starve, while the life that ought to be devoted to its culture is consumed in ministering to the flesh.

Some time ago a poor woman who lived in a basement room in New York City was missed for several days, and when her neighbors knocked at her door they found it locked and upon prying it open they saw the woman lying on the floor with the life of her body slowly ebbing away. There was neither fire, nor fuel, nor furniture, nor food in the place, and there in that great city of so much wealth she was slowly starving to death. You say that was very sad. Yes, but I can tell you something sadder than that. It's sometimes pretty hard

for a poor woman to get enough bread for the body, but there are those in whose soul the life of God exists and though surrounded with every provision for its health they are making provision for the flesh only, and if you could pry open the door of that inner house where the soul is and there see what God sees you would find a heart without prayer or love, with but little faith and flickering hope and in it a soul that is starving for the bread of life. Dear child, which nature are you nourishing? What are the strongest things in your life, the spiritual or the natural; Christ or the world?

Now I'm not going to enumerate for you those things upon which the self-life thrives. If I did, I'd never get through. Paul began it once, and as if it were a hopeless task, he finished up with an "et cetera." After telling the Galatian Christians how they might be kept from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh he begins to enumerate some of those things in which the self-life delights. It's an awful list of ugly sins, and if we were to fill out the "and such like" with which he ends we would find it to include a good many not so ugly and some in fact, which many, at least nominal Christians,

have deemed altogether harmless. Read the list for yourself and then out of your own experience see if you can in any wise fill up the "and such like." Possibly some sorrow has come into your life, and not able to understand the ministry of affliction you've been living with a bitter feeling toward God. The evil one has whispered to you that God has been unkind, and although you've read Romans 8:28 you've preferred to listen to the subtle whisperings of the enemy and you are feeding the old man to-day because you are failing to trust God who has been kind and loving if you only understood. Possibly it was the rising of an angry passion and you let your temper slip, and you've known all these days and weeks and months and years that you ought to ask the other's pardon, but your pride has been in the way and you haven't done it and you've been feeding the self-life all this while. There has come into your life a question about the rightness or wrongness of certain things and you have continued to do them, though doubtful about their legitimacy or propriety. But Paul says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If there is any practice in my life concerning which I am in doubt,

until that doubt shall have disappeared, it is my solemn duty to put it away until God tells me unmistakably that I may take it up again; and if I am continuing in that which is not of faith but of doubt, I am feeding the carnal nature and not the divine. You were reading a novel that the world had gone mad over, and as you read there came stealing into your mind unholy visions and something, or somebody rather, for it was the Holy Spirit, told you to lay it aside for it was not wholesome for a pure hearted child, but it was fascinating and you continued to the end. You were making provision for the flesh. I could tell you more about a certain man, but this much by way of illustration: He was purchasing a pair of shoes. After one or two of plainer style the dealer fitted a most handsome pair upon him. They were comfortable and beautiful, but as the man put his foot out with the shoe upon it, he discovered something and he said, "Harry Field, you can't have that shoe." It was not in the shoe, but in himself the something was discovered. It would have been all right for you possibly to wear that shoe, but it would have been all wrong for him to wear it. It may seem a little thing but it was infinitely better

for him to wear the plainer pair than to make provision for the self-life every time he saw the finer pair upon his feet.

Dear child of God, which nature are you nourishing? What is it in your life that is withering and blasting a character that otherwise might be strong and beautiful and lovely? I beg of you in God's name, *Put it away!* For although it may seem a little thing it is nourishing a carnal growth that will hinder your spiritual development and make your life but a poor excuse for what God would have you be. Of one thing you may be sure. Everything that ministers to the self-life is wrong for the child of God, and upon all that carnality mentioned by Paul, upon all that reviewed a moment ago and upon many things else under certain conditions you can write that one little and woe-entailing word of three letters and know that whatever is hindering the growth of your soul into the fullness of the measure of God's thought for you, it is *sin.* Sin is the worm in the heart of the tree—the sturdy oak that defied the wind and the winter's blast, but whose leaves withered and whose branches dropped off and whose roots dried up when it gave that little worm a place in its heart. Child,

what is it that is spoiling your life? Put it away.

But now some one says: "The old man is so strong within me, how can I subdue him? I've nourished him so long that he has become my master. His lustings are so strong and his cravings so fierce it is so very hard to deny them. And then you spoke about starvation, which seems to imply a gradual process. Can I not have release at once, or must I wait the long years through?" Yes, child, you must wait the long years through. Do not misunderstand me; I am not speaking of what God can or cannot do, but what the Word and universal experience proves He does do. Sanctification, whatever else it is not, is progressive. It is possible to be kept, if you will, from known sin, and yet sin is possibly more than you have recognized, and if you could see with the vision of God, in spite of all your sanctification, you might abhor yourself in dust and ashes; and it is yet possible that after your attainment unto what you thought the highest possible excellence, there will still await you in years to come the vision of something wrong which now you permit as right.

But let us see if we cannot learn something more of what Paul means by "making no pro-

vision for the flesh." Four words will, I think, help us in this matter.

1. *Crucifixion.* Gal. 5:24. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." Notice, the verb is in the aorist, the past tense, and it is spoken of them that are Christ's. Now when did you crucify your flesh? Why, evidently when the blessed Christ Himself, in the likeness of sinful flesh, was nailed to the cross; and so throughout the epistles the Christian is ideally considered as one who is dead and he is told in Rom. 6:11 to "likewise" reckon himself dead indeed unto sin. "Likewise." Like what? Why, just as Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh was crucified, so I being in union with Him was nailed there too and my self-life has been fixed to the cross. In this sense the self-life is dead. I dragged it there and drove the nail and said, "Thou shalt forever die." Between me and that old man with his lustings and his jealousies and all his carnal cravings now stands the cross and I am henceforth to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made me free. Oh, you who *have* crucified the flesh—and you have if you are Christ's—think of it. It will help you. Reckon yourselves dead.

Look upon those precious wounds and then into His dear face and say, "My Christ, when you died, I died!" and, "How shall I that am dead unto sin live any longer therein?"

But you say, "I must have something more." Yes, indeed you must. For you say, "I find the old man obtruding himself and the lustings of his nature within me in spite of what I will should be his utter destruction." This brings us to the second word.

2. *Mortification.* Rom. 8:13. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." Here is the flesh in the believer recognized as alive. To mortify, literally means "to cause to decay," and unlike crucifixion, which is more of an act, this word has in it the idea of process. It is certainly true that we are to deal with our dispositions summarily. "Let him that stole steal no more." If the eye offends it is to be plucked out; if it is the hand, it is to be cut off. But suppose one has a fever? The surgeon's knife is useless here. We are now considering sin as a vicious organism and are dealing with its appetites, and there must be administered an inner antiseptic. In other words, to become perfect at once is a simple impossibility. And what is

that antiseptic? Read the verse again. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify"—it is the blessed Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit indwelling and infilling, that lusteth against the flesh, despoils the old man of his power and subdues the self-life while the Christ-life goes on to victory and to beauty. But I know some of you are asking: "Must I, in order to my spiritual growth, always have my attention applied to that which is diseased and repulsive? Does making no provision for the flesh mean that I must be forever dealing with the flesh?" Our third word will help us here.

3. *Transformation.* 2 Cor. 3:18. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord we are changed (transformed) into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord." How is growth into Christlikeness produced? Not by morbid self-analysis and perpetual anxiety about this inner devitilization of the flesh that is going on. This would be to rob one's experience of all its sweetness; but by beholding the beauty of Him. We must remember the lesson of the lily. And will you notice that as the mortification was through the Spirit so also is the transformation "by the Spirit of the Lord." Speaking of the

Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "He shall glorify me," and this process of the disintegration of the flesh and transformation of the soul. He carries on by revealing Jesus unto us, and while you are beholding Him and so knowing Him more intimately and therefore loving Him more dearly, self dies and Christ lives within.

And now you say: "This is glorious; such an experience I covet. Will the Holy Spirit do this for me?" This brings us to the last word.

4. *Dedication.* While I believe growth is gradual, there is a condition or position of the soul conducive to its health and therefore to its acceleration, and into this position I believe we may and ought to come at once and in a definite way. That is the position of the surrendered life. Dedicating myself to God and saying: "Blessed indwelling Spirit of Christ, fill me and let the filling be deep: I want to be just as much like Jesus as it is possible for man to be. I do give myself to Thee—rule my entire being, subdue and cast out and lead me in the way of life and beauty and power."

"*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* EVERY BRANCH IN ME THAT BEARETH NOT FRUIT HE TAKETH AWAY: AND EVERY BRANCH THAT BEARETH FRUIT, HE PURGETH IT, THAT IT MAY BRING FORTH MORE FRUIT. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*"—St. John's Gospel, Chapter 15.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT AND SPIRITUAL DWARFAGE

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." —JOHN 15:2.

HOWEVER much the evolutionists have disagreed with the more conservative thinkers they have agreed among themselves that in the production of man a sentence of suspension has been written upon the law of development in the physical realm. Man as an animal is God's noblest work in the physical universe.

But if what science tells us is true, it is to be regretted that many of his powers have not only been arrested in development but have actually deteriorated from what they once were. Yet how little is the sadness connected with such a thought to be compared with that sadness which comes from the thought of the arrested development of a human soul.

In many respects other animals surpass man; the horse is stronger, the deer is fleeter, the eagle can see farther, while man's sense of smell

and sound is almost as nothing in comparison with many of the lower vertebrata. But though all this is true man is more than compensated by additional and higher powers. Man is an intelligence and if he cannot run with the deer he can reach him with the bullet; if he cannot see with the eagle he can surpass the eagle's eye with the telescope or the microscope; if he is weaker than a horse he can control the beast with a bit and bridle; but what of all that ever comes to man can be of any compensation or comfort for a dwarfed and degenerated soul?

I have seen people whose bodies have had a stunted growth and we call them dwarfs, and I have thought that were not so hard to bear, but oh, to have a dwarfed soul! And there is even something sadder than that—to watch the waning of the faculties; to have the vision grow dimmer, the sound grow fainter, nay, but worse, even to have the mind grow weaker! Yes, I could even think of my body shrinking in stature from year to year, and terrible as such a thing would be, I think I might even bear that. But oh, to have a mind that is slowly forgetting God, a character that is slowly losing its beauty, a spirit that is losing its glory, a heart that is losing its love, a soul that

is smaller now than it was a year ago, is a thought that makes one shudder!

Look now at the text we have chosen. Two things are written there:

(1) Every branch that beareth fruit the Father purgeth that it may bear more fruit, and (2) every branch that beareth not fruit He taketh away. Notice for a moment the fruit-bearing branch. What a restful thought; no worrying about the fruit; no responsibility, except just to keep in close touch, to abide in the vine and receive its life, which in the very nature of things must bear fruit of itself. If we would only appreciate this thought of our own nothingness and our utter and necessary dependence upon the vine, I am sure that everything would come right in every moment of our life.

And now about the purging. It is the vine-dresser's process of pruning his vines, with which I presume all are familiar. There are certain parts of the plant that must be cut away in order to its best development from a fruit-bearing standpoint. There is such a thing as superfluous growth, because it is growth in the wrong direction—the suckers that grow on the farmer's corn, the water sprouts that shoot out from the stem of a tree

and consume the sap that ought to go on to feed the ripening fruit. And so with the vines, many of the branches, the same in nature with the vine, run to wood and leaves and are not only worthless in themselves but hindrances to other branches that are growing fruit. So far as leafage and appearances go such branches may seem quite as promising as any, but a little inspection will prove them to be wasting the life of the vine in a mere tendency to size, and often when they seem to be doing grandly the vinedresser's knife is ruthlessly applied and the fine appearance is cut away just because it is a cumbrance to the vine and cast aside to wither and be burned.

Just so it is in the spiritual world; there can be little fruitfulness without the use of the sharp knife. You will notice that it is the branch that is bearing a little fruit that is purged of its worthless parts that it may bear more fruit. In order to the richest growth in grace and best results in Christian experience there must be the cutting off of every encumbering growth and the purging away of all that is unholy in the life.

But as the sprout cut away is only a hindrance and not essentially different from the

branch it is forced to leave, how appropriate, in closest keeping with the analogy, to use this Scripture in the first place with a reference to those things which might be deemed lawful but by hosts of earnest Christians are considered questionable. Paul, speaking of such things said, in 1 Cor. 6:12, "All things are lawful unto me but all things are not expedient." And why not expedient? To this Paul gives the most thorough answer, answering it from the standpoint of a man's God, of his neighbor and of himself.

1. As concerns God. 1 Cor. 10:31. Inexpedient because of the danger of misrepresenting Him. By such indulgence we often sanction a tone of Christianity lower than His approval warrants, and thus we are injuring Him and the cause that is dear to Him. Concerning the eating of questionable meats, a subject of discussion in his day, Paul closed his advice by saying, "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If you can conscientiously ask God's blessing on your undertaking and His presence to attend you as you enter upon it, such a thing may be deemed right for you to do, but unless in that pleasure or that business the Holy

Spirit can glorify Jesus it is wrong for you to participate. Do you call that narrow? I call it exceedingly broad. It is possible to become an instrument of unrighteousness in any amusement, even though most innocent, but there is a wide range of pleasure in which, when entered upon in the Spirit of Christ, the very beauty and glory of the Son of God will be manifested to the world. In any undertaking I should first want to know, "Will this please God?" Calling upon one of his parishioners a certain pastor inquired concerning the daughter who was away at college, and the mother said, "I was just reading a letter from her as you came in; part of it will interest you." And she read a part of it where the daughter was telling her mother of a dance that was to be given by her class; all her friends were going and she wanted to go herself very much indeed, but she knew her mother did not approve of it and for her sake she was going to stay away. "Well," remarked the pastor, "that's very beautiful of her indeed; you must love her very much." "Love her!" replied the mother, as a tear came into her eye, "I wish she was here now, that I might put my arms around her and tell her how *much* I love

her." In some such way as that I would like God to feel toward me, and I am sure He will if I am trying to walk "worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

2. As concerns our neighbor. 1 Cor. 8:9. Inexpedient says Paul, "lest by any means my liberty becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak." We all know what that means. Although I might engage in this thing without any harm to myself, I am making it possible for others to do it who are not so discerning or self-controlled as I. I will not do that which may bring ruin to another. "Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died," says Paul. Said a young man who had inherited a passion for liquor: "I came near breaking my pledge last night. The smell of wine was so tempting that I could hardly resist it, but just as I was about to yield I heard Miss ——— refuse. This gave me courage. I watched her all evening and said to myself, 'If she drinks, I will.' I was hoping and yet fearing that she would, but as often as she was asked she declined and so all unconscious to herself she pulled me safely through." What a pity had that young lady been without conviction concerning the use of intoxicants in society.

If by any sacrifice that I can make I can save my weaker brother, then I want to be big enough, I want to be unselfish enough to save him by my self-denial. Don't you? It's not so much a question of inherent rightness or wrongness as it is a question of how big or how little you are going to be.

3. As concerns myself; and this is more to the point in keeping with the analogy. (*a*) 1 Cor. 6:12. Inexpedient, says Paul, are some things, "lest I be brought under their power." "Oh," said a man, when cautioned against the use of morphine, "I take but little at a time and can stop when I choose." "Suppose you try for six months," said his friend. At the end of six months, after the fiercest struggle of his life, he thanked his friend for his advice and confessed that he did not realize how greatly the habit held him under its control. When once under the power of a thing, no matter what it is, that thing for you is an evil in your life.

(*b*) 1 Cor. 10:23. Inexpedient, says Paul, "because they do not edify." While the primary reference is here doubtless to the edification of others, it is equally and even more true of the one who engages in them. And this is

what we have had especially in mind from the beginning—they hinder growth and fill the church with barren, fruitless lives.

A prominent Christian worker once said, "I never knew a Christian that began to dance who was not soon missed from the prayer-meeting." Having loved this present world, Demas-like, they soon forsake the things of God. It seems there is an incompatibility between the two which experience seems to prove will not abide each other. Such Christians have lost their flavor; their fruit has been drying up, something has been stealing away their strength and if the pruning process is not soon begun something serious will occur. And then say what we will, the lovely characters of this world, in whose lives the very beauty and gentleness of Jesus have shone with resplendent glory, have not been those whose chief sources of amusement were found in the giddy, venturesome circle of a Christ-ignoring world.

Dr. Parkhurst's rule is a good one. Listen to it: "The prime question in allowing myself any indulgence is whether such indulgence in any way unfits me to be a Christian in my thoughts, deeds and devotions; whether I

return with an eye just as quick to detect the divine presence and a heart that just as promptly and sensitively feels the helpful strength issuing from the pages of God's Word; whether the diversion helps to open or tends to close the closet of prayer and whether it tends to fill or clip the wings of my devotion."

(*c*) Romans 14:23. And then as if our duty concerning such matters might not in some particular instance be sufficiently plain, even with such guiding principles before us, Paul sets forth a simple direction that will always point a man to the right side if he has the least desire to do the will of God. He says, "If you doubt, don't do it." "Whatever is not of faith is sin." I had preached a sermon on consecration and had quoted those lines of Miss Havergal's, "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold," and the next day a letter was received from a good and well-meaning Christian woman telling of help received from the sermon, but saying she hoped she would next see me without the gold cuff-buttons I was wearing. Well, the gold cuff-buttons did not seem to be wrong for me, but I can conceive of a condition of mind where they would be wrong.

A lady came to me really in great perplexity of mind concerning her sealskin coat. "Is it wrong for me to wear it?" she asked. "Yes," I said; "wrong for you." "And why for me?" she said. "Because," said I, "of the question in your own mind." It is so with amusements; the minute a doubt comes into your mind about their inherent wrong or about their expediency put them out of your life; in time they may become right again because the doubt has disappeared, but "he that doubteth," says Paul, speaking of questionable meats, "is condemned if he eat."

But the question with us thus far has not been so much one of wrongness but of inexpediency, not alone because such things are so often the means of injury to others, but also of keeping that which is higher and holier out of our own lives. If such things stand between you and your God, between you and the beauty of holiness, then heaven itself can witness no nobler sight than to see you resolutely and calmly divest yourself of these lower things that you may be clothed upon with the higher.

You tell me it is hard to part with so much that has really become a part of your life. Yes, but there is to be no loss except for gain.

What was it the poet told us about reaching higher things upon stepping stones manufactured out of our own dead selves?

As the husbandman comes into the vineyard with his keen sharp instrument the apparently flourishing vine shrinks and says, "Why must I give up this beautiful leafage, this luxuriant growth in which I so much delight?" And the vinedresser replies to the vine and says, "This rank growth is not only superfluous but it will hinder your fruitfulness, and unless you allow it to be cut away you will be found in time a barren and worthless vine fit only to be cut down and consumed in the fire"; and then the sharp knife begins its ruthless work and though the vine bleeds for a while the vintage always justifies the separation.

Let us not shrink from this cutting away. Let us say: "Come, O Thou Spirit of the beautiful Christ, Thou knowest what is best; in Thy hands we place our lives; make them beautiful in Thy sight, and as Thou hast made us free to act, tell us what to do, which way Thou wouldst have us go, what Thou wouldst have us surrender and by Thy grace which Thou dost freely give we will do it all"; and that will be the hour.

"When the tree of life will burst into flower,
And rain at our feet a glorious dower
Of something grander than ever we knew."

But the purging process does not end with merely questionable things. As the vine must be cleansed of all plant-devouring insects, and all parasitical growths that twine themselves about the vine and suck its very life away, and of the little worm that bores its way into the very heart, so also is it true of the Christian. Alas! that so many harbor some secret sin in their heart—it may be only a little one as they think, but it is eating out their very life and making it barren of all that is pleasing to God. Have you such a sin? Put it away, and see what God will do for you. You have doubtless read of Mammoud who destroyed a costly idol he was tempted to spare, and how when he struck it, it was hollow and bursting rained at his feet a whole shower of diamonds and precious stones. It will be so with you. Trench has written about it in his poetry:

"Thou, too, heaven's commissioned warrior to cast
down each idol throne
In thy heart's profaned temple, make this faithful
deed thine own.
Let descend the faithful blow;

From their wreck and from their ruin first will thy
true riches flow.
Thou shalt lose thy life and find it, thou shalt boldly
cast it forth,
And then, back again receiving, know it in its end-
less worth."

But suppose the vine should dictate to its dresser and having the power should say, "No, I cannot, I will not part with these things." You know what that would mean—*Barrenness.* In Brazil there is a plant called the "Matador" or "Murderer." It is a poisonous parasite that fixes itself upon the most vigorous trees of the forest and creeping upward winds its arm-like tendrils in close embrace about the tree until at last it shoots its beautiful and poisonous flowery head above the strangled summit as if in triumph, for it has *killed* the tree. Can this be true of a Christian? What was the second thing written in the text? "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away," and in the sixth verse it is said they are "cast into the fire and burned." It seems to read, either fruit bearing or burning. What does that mean? I do not know. I know what I think it means. I know what the great schools of theology have thought it means. I

know they differ altogether in their opinions, and I know that the really wise man is the man who knows that he does not know it all, and I know that in the light of these words I would not dare to willfully persist in known sin. There have been men, and some of them for whom my heart has bled, who have done such a thing and God only knows the result. There is in my mind an instance of this, of which for reasons I must speak reverently and with care —a man who for almost a score of years occupied a place of responsibility and usefulness in the Master's vineyard as superintendent of a flourishing Sabbath School. He was apparently an earnest Christian and much devoted to the work. In connection with his business there came to him an opportunity for making considerable money which, however, incurred an evident violation of the Sabbath day. He felt the thing to be wrong, and yet he yielded not only the first Sunday, but the next, and then the next, and so on. Naturally he began to lose interest in his Christian work. It no longer yielded him the same joy, nor was he unconscious of the lack of something that formerly had helped him and made his influence strong. By and by he resigned as super-

intendent; then his church attendance grew irregular and after a while it ceased altogether. He gave himself up to making money, apparently lost all interest in the things of God, and a few years ago passed away seemingly unconcerned about his own future.

I am not even going to suggest the possibility of a regenerate man being lost; it may be that such branches were never really in the Vine, or it may be that the burning is but the drapery in the analogy and used to complete the imagery in keeping with what really transpires in a vineyard, and such branches because of their unfruitfulness have been laid aside in the sense in which some have interpreted Paul's words in 1 Cor. 9:27, where he says he endeavors to keep the self-life crucified, "lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway." Not that Paul was in any danger of being eventually cast away into that pit of burning where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; not that any niche in God's gallery can be empty of its intended statue; not that any power on earth, above it or beneath it can tear one lamb from the Shepherd's bosom, but that the possibility was ever present with him of his heart being

set upon something displeasing to God, of his becoming ambitious for himself rather than for Christ, of the loss of influence through doubtful indulgence by reason of which his life would become barren and unfruitful and God would *strip him of his power, and casting him aside would give to another his place of service and his crown of rejoicing.*

It is this thought that has been before me throughout all I have said. Is yours an arrested development? Can you recall a time of deeper interest in the Master's work; a time of greater pleasure in his service; a time when you could rest your head at night with the sweet consciousness that that day had counted something for Jesus—possibly more than a week or month or year counts now? Was there a time when you felt the avenues of your soul coursing with the rich peace and satisfaction of Christ? And are all these things of the past? Something is wrong somewhere, and if you will but cast yourself down before Him He will put His finger on the spot and show you where it is.

I want to be very tender just at this point. This is not to denounce your sin as manifested in any particular form, but my God in heaven,

what an awful thing it would be to be forced to feel that Christ has no further use for me because I have thwarted Him and withstood Him and pulled away from Him and have been now so long a proud and self-concerned professed child of His, that I am left to drag these weary years through and go up at last into His presence a dwarfed and stunted weakling! May heaven save us all from a thing like that!

Not very long ago we were preaching in a tent during a time of fierce and frequent storms. Several times the tent, a massive one with heavy center poles well stayed, blew down. One day driving into the country we saw a mighty monarch of the forest lying prostrate on the ground. It had gone down during the night. "Well," said Mr. Weeden, my associate, "no wonder the old tent went down when a tree like that had to give up." But our surprise vanished when we came up and read the story of its downfall. It had been a magnificent tree, once tall and beautiful and strong, bearing its fruit in its season. The winds tried to blow it down, but it struck its roots deeper in the soil and laughed at the puny efforts of the storm. The sun tried to burn its foliage; it dried up the soil and tried

to starve its roots; the rains poured down as if they would drown it; the snows piled up around it as if they would freeze it or bury it, but the old tree grew on and prospered. But by and by the tree seemed to lose its spirit. Its leaves were not so fresh and green; they withered early and came in fewer numbers each recurring year; its fruit grew small and shrivelled; its branches dropped off, many of them, and by and by another storm came, not so fierce as many it had met before, but the fibers had lost their strength and the once proud and defiant tree fell with a mighty crash. And when we came up to it we discovered that its huge trunk was all hollow and that for probably many years it had been scarcely more than the rim of a tree. The rest of the story is very brief. One unfortunate day a little worm ate its way into the heart of the tree, laid its eggs there and died. Soon there were a dozen worms, and from these came many more. Soon there were hundreds feeding upon the heart of the tree until they had eaten away nearly all its life and left it an easy prey to the storms that blew about it.

Dear friend, the application is easy. God help us to make it each one for himself. Have

you been falling in the hour of temptation? Has your life been dry of late? No buoyancy of spirit, no intimate fellowship with Jesus, no tear and no prayer. Ah, child, there was no salvation for the tree; there is for you. The blessed Spirit of Christ, pure, strong and true is waiting to come in and He will bring His own health with Him and you shall no longer be the "servant of sin" of any kind, but "yielding your members unto righteousness you shall have your fruit unto holiness."

May God help us to put away that which is injurious and to put it away now; and for every wrong thing and for every inexpedient thing, which by His grace we lay down, we shall be made rich in Him for He will give us Himself in ever increasing measure until the very fullness of God shall be ours and Christ shall be all in all. God grant it.

THE SIGNS OF GROWTH

SOMEWHERE I have read a beautiful little story which I can but imperfectly recall. It was entitled "The Measuring Rod," and it was, in short, the account of a time at certain intervals when an angel of God came down to measure the spiritual growth of His people. He had a mysterious and beautiful rod against which the people were asked to come and stand, and when they took their place, the one after the other, a strange thing occurred. The stature of the measured one would either increase or decrease according to their spiritual condition as compared with the same at the angel's last visit. There were a great many surprises. Mrs. A., who was president of the Ladies' Aid and superintendent of the Infant Department and the leader in several of the other church undertakings and whom everybody thought would look exceedingly well under the rod, shrank away almost to nothing. But old Jerry, the cobbler, always stooping below his height, whom no one thought of save as they had some mending to be done, fairly blazed with a glow of glory

which the mysterious rod shed about him, as his deformity seemed to leave him while his stature increased above that of anybody in the village. There was one young lady there who knew she loved her Christ, but she was painfully conscious at that time of having been so often envious of another young lady's handsomer garments than she herself could afford; and of other things which at the time she had argued herself into conceding as nothing wrong, but which now in the presence of that heavenly rod smote her with a deep sense of guilt. She tried to hide herself among the crowd, thinking the angel might overlook her, but he seemed to know everyone by name and presently hers was called, and as she took her place it was just as she dreaded it would be, for though she stood on the tip of her toes trying to raise herself, she knew she was shrinking down. With tears in her eyes she besought the angel not to put the record down, but he said to her, with a kind and pitying smile, "Daughter, the record must go down, for I must show it to the Master, but when I come again I'm sure it will be otherwise." She promised him it would and went back to live anew for Christ. I wonder how we of this

audience would fare if that angel with his rod were here to-day?

There is something very impressive to me in that story as I recall it, for although it is but an innocent fiction, it is based on a tremendous truth, and always arouses the question within me, "Am I or am I not growing in grace?" "Am I or am I not increasing in spiritual stature?" and then the query comes, "Is there a way that I can arrive at any certain knowledge of my spiritual development, if such there be?" I cannot hear myself grow, for there is no whirr of machinery; I cannot see myself grow, for that which grows is invisible, and if it were not, all thorough growth is too slow to be watched. But there must be some mark, some outward manifestation to the world or inward evidence to myself that the life of Christ is prospering within my soul. It is to this we wish to refer for a brief while at this place. If the Christian grows in grace as Peter would have him do, it ought to be that any of the graces in which he is supposed to grow, could be taken as the rod with which to measure his development; for ideal growth above all things else is symmetrical. God would have us be a complete all-round Christian with every grace

of the new life developed so that from whatever side approached, the world will see something of the Christ-life within us.

We might take any of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned by Paul in Galatians, or by Peter in his epistle. We might take Faith and measure ourselves by that, for what stronger virtue than to cease from doubt and Job-like to believe in God even though He seem to slay you. We might take Submission, that heroic virtue that chooses just what God has chosen for you though it be the stony path and the bleeding heart. We might take Love, that divinest of graces, that always finds us helping somebody. We might take Humility; the full corn in the ear always bends down. We might take these or any one of many others, but being confined of course by the very breadth of Christian character to a somewhat limited test, I have selected four things, measuring rods so to speak, by which you may judge how much, if at all, you have been growing in grace. And I have been careful to select those things about which there can be no mistaken judgment. Oftentimes we think we are humbler and more loving and better than we really are; but here are some things that will lead us to a pretty

safe conclusion concerning the height of our spiritual man. May God help us as we go along, in case we see we are lacking (and this doubtless will be true in some degree of us all), to earnestly covet, as the apostle prayed, to increase more and more as we go on from degree to degree toward the stature of the perfect man.

1. In the first place, we shall mention *a spiritual appetite;* and we mean by that of course an appetite for spiritual things. A healthy man always has a good appetite, and health after all is the prime essential of growth; but since the things of God are and always will be distasteful to the natural man, the very fact of your appetite for them is evidence of the health and growth of your spiritual man; and since the appetites of these two natures are wholly antagonistic, their relative strength within you will quite readily determine your standing in the eyes of God and of the world as well.

Let us be honest now. You tell me the things that are strongest in your life and I can give you a fair estimate of the stature of your spiritual man. Are you in the house of God on Sunday more for the sake of your profession

than for feasting your soul in the worship of God? The occasional, and very occasional, visit to the prayer-meeting,—is it for the sake of appearance, or if that sounds too harsh, let us say for duty's sake, and when sitting in these places does the mind play truant to the occasion and indulge itself in frequent excursions and excitements wherein you know from experience an indulgence brings gratification stronger than you have ever experienced in waiting upon God? It was Hannah Whitehall Smith, I think, who wrote,

"I love to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,
And spend the hours of setting day
In humble, grateful prayer."

Do you really delight to do that, or do you prefer to steal away somewhere else and spend your evenings where God is all forgotten? The Psalmist said the man who had forsaken the wickedness of this world was a blessed man. He said, however, that his delight was in the law of the Lord and that in that law he was to be found meditating day and night; that he was like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.

What about your delight? How much real satisfaction and deep gratifying pleasure do you get from meditating in this Word?—or when you read it, providing you do, is it a perfunctory service, is it from the constraint of duty, a thing that you feel you ought to do rather than a thing you love to do?

Come, friends, have you really learned to love Jesus? If you have, could you ever enter into any indulgence that could drive Him out of your thoughts? We are told to "remember Him," and if we loved Him would this not be the natural thing to do? These are the words of a noble character whom I delight to think of as a friend. Said he: "I think very many times of the one I love best. When in the night I awake my first thought is of her; and when early in the morning the sunrise comes stealing into my room, my first thought is of her, and constantly throughout the day my mind goes out to her. I think of all the sweet things she has said, of all the sweet and loving things she has done, and *I do* remember her." Do you think he would enjoy a separation from her? And if we really love Jesus, do you not think that before we went any place or gave ourselves to any indulgence we would first ask,

"Can I have Jesus with me in these things?" I recall the story of the young lady who wore a locket about her neck into which no one was permitted to look. But one day in an hour of serious sickness one of her most intimate friends was allowed to open the sacred ornament, and there she saw the words, "Whom not having seen I love." All her life she had been remembering Him, thinking over sweet thoughts about Him, and need I tell you how marvelously like Him she had grown as her character ripened in its rare loveliness, while her friends wondered at it until they knew the secret?

In my work as an evangelist I find scores of converts, especially among the young, who are perplexed about worldly amusements, and they come asking me if it is wrong to dance or to do so and so. I do not wonder at this, for as yet they are like those Christians to whom Paul speaks in the third chapter of First Corinthians, saying, "Brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." In them the carnal nature was still predominate, and such things as were troubling the consciences of these young converts were the very things they cared

most to do; but that you who have been for years in the Christian life should be concerned about those things is very sad indeed, for you have had time to develop a taste for better things, and if you have been a growing Christian and have not been living all the while in the elementary stage of experience and are not babes in Christ, and therefore carnal, which is only another expression for the self-life, there will have been developed within you an appetite which will prove to be what Dr. Chalmers has called the "expulsive power of a new affection."

Poor Henry Heine—we say poor because he was *so very poor indeed*—he worshiped what he thought was the beautiful, and the Venus de Milo, an armless, half-clad statue in the Louvre at Paris, he called his goddess and said it made him better to sit and gaze upon her; but *he had never seen Him* who is the Rose of Sharon for beauty and the Lily of the Valley for loveliness. But it is said of Dannecker, a great sculptor of Germany, that he was one time asked to use his wonderful skill in carving a statue of Venus, and he made a strange reply. He had been for years working over a face of the Christ and at last produced a face of such marvelous beauty and tenderness that

people would weep as they looked upon it. And when asked to carve a Venus, he replied, "I can never make a Venus after I have looked upon the face of Christ." What a secret is here! And what but may be true of us all! To have an appetite which only the things of Christ can satisfy speaks already of a soul that is growing large, and to nourish it through the appointed means of grace, brings such a satisfaction to the soul that every sinful attraction will lose its power; and such a vision of His beauty that the fairest things of this world will lose their splendor.

2. A second evidence of growth in grace is *a keener appreciation of how exceedingly sinful all sin is*, and a correspondingly deeper loathing for it. As we grow in grace the more hideous and repulsive does sin, of whatever kind, become. Dear child, have you really learned to hate sin so that you shrink from the least touch of it, and when you know it has touched you, is your heart wrung with an unspeakable agony because your sin has pierced the heart of God? I think Paul had come to a place like that. Just before he died he called himself the chief of sinners. What did he mean? Not that he was a greater sinner than when he was

yet a babe in Christ or when he blasphemed God and waded in the blood of His slaughtered saints. No, not that, but that now when he knew so much about God, one little sin, however small, caused him infinitely more pain than all the grosser sins of his former life. Child of God, if you have been growing in grace, something like that will be true of you.

3. The third evidence of growth in grace is *a clearer discernment of right and wrong.* I will let Paul explain what I mean. In 1 Cor. 2:15 it is written, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things," and if you will look in the Revised Version you will find the word "judgeth" changed to "discerneth," "the spiritual man discerneth all things"; and if you will turn to Hebrews 5:14 you will read, "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

A little child through ignorance of what is harmful would be in constant peril of serious hurt were it not for the care given it by some grown person who has learned by the discrimination which comes from long exercise of the senses to make proper distinction between things which are hurtful and things which are

useful. Imagine, if possible, a world in which danger always came with noiseless tread and invisible form, in which decay was not malodorous, in which mutilation was painless and disease carried on its dread work with no warning to its victim; imagine such a world and the work of preservation for which the senses are responsible is at once apparent. What wonderful and indispensable things the senses are and to what a degree of accuracy they may be trained. But there are spiritual senses as well as natural. There is a spiritual eye and a spiritual taste and other senses of the spiritual man corresponding to those of the natural man. But alas, for those who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and who because of their undisciplined senses, senses that are not exercised to discern good and evil, are in the babe condition, needing a guardian to tell them which way to go and what to eat lest they be continually indulging that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to their own souls.

A soldier was on duty as sentinel in a savage country. He had been for many years a hunter among the forests. As the night deepened he heard the cracking of the forest twigs,

and looking out he saw what appeared to be a wild hog slowly approaching and apparently searching among the leaves for the nuts that had fallen from the trees. But the hunter's keen eye detected a certain awkwardness about the movements and suspicion was aroused. To fire and shoot a wild hog would be to make himself the butt of ridicule among his companions, but feeling that his sense of sight so trained by use could be depended upon he raised his rifle and fired, and with a bound and a yell an Indian leaped to his feet and fell back dead.

How often Satan comes in disguise. How often evil presents itself with seeming plausibility, but the Word of God is that in just the degree in which we have arrived to maturity, that is according to our growth in grace, will be our ability to more readily detect that which is inconsistent with the true worship of our God. We will see evil where years before we would never have thought of even looking for it. Things which formerly we would not allow ourselves to think of as questionable we will now have grace to put away. The word "understanding," used in Isaiah 11:13 to describe this faculty of soul, in the original means

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"scent" or "smell," and what is promised there, is a keenness of scent in the fear of the Lord; the ability to detect the obnoxious in what others indulge without suspicion of its harm; a sensitiveness as it were to danger yet a great way off that will drive us to Jesus for shelter. Something like this Paul must have meant when speaking of spiritually matured people as those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Sometimes Mrs. B. comes into my study and she will say, "Why, dear, it is very close in here," and I reply, "Well, I hadn't noticed it." The reason is plain. I had been sitting in that atmosphere for hours, had come somewhat into harmony with it and was not aware of how really unwholesome it was, but she who had been downstairs and out-of-doors enjoying God's own pure air came into my room with her senses sharpened to discern what I could not detect, because mine had become dull through living in touch with that which was foul and unhealthy. Just so there are some Christians who are living in the midst of moral malaria and do not seem to know it. And when they hear some pure-hearted man speak

a word of caution against some pet indulgence they think him too radical for sensible people to listen to. There are Christians who will hang unholy pictures on the walls of their imagination, who will take up some of the impure fiction over which the world is going wild and read it with relish through to the end, who will indulge in a laugh at remarks which could not well be made in mixed society and feel no pain though the hurt has been just as surely received. People who call themselves Christians, and I would not by any language I might use mean to unchristianize anybody, living in an atmosphere of pleasure and sin which would be positively intolerable if they only knew the fragrance and the exhilaration of the atmosphere that comes from constant communion with the living Christ, the vital breath of prayer, the uplift from the blessed Word, the inspiration found in doing His will. Are your spiritual senses being exercised by reason of use to discern both good and evil?

4. And now a word about the other evidence of such growth. *It is victory over sin.* We certainly must admit that according to the measure of one's light it is possible to be kept from all known sin—not from falling *into*

temptation but from *falling* in temptation. Whether any allow themselves to be so constantly and continually kept is not for us to say, but to claim this for oneself is far from asserting one's perfection. For anyone to talk about being *perfectly* sanctified sounds perfectly absurd. Such an one has failed to appreciate what holiness really is. Certainly we are to be holy; and we are to be still holier. Mr. Meyer says that he was one time paying a pastoral visit to a poor washerwoman who had just gotten out a line of clothes. He congratulated her because they looked so white. Pleased with her pastor's kind words she invited him to have a cup of tea. While they were sitting at tea the sky clouded and there was a snow storm, and as he came out the white snow lay everywhere about, and he said to her, "Your washing does not look quite so clean as it did." "Ah," she said, "the washing is right enough, but what can stand against God Almighty's white?" And so, my friend, you may think yourself clean, but if you could only see God, if you are a man of true heart, you would cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" and repenting in dust and ashes you would cry, "Lord, forgive me!"

But while all this is true, still if I did not find in my own experience that I am having easier victory over sin to-day than I had ten years ago, how disappointing to me would be the power which the Word teaches comes from union with Christ, from the indwelling and infilling of His own omnipotent Spirit. Peter talks about being "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5). *Banish forever the thought that it is necessary for the Christian to sin.* Tempted you may be. Jesus was. "The life of holiness," says Macgregor, "is not a life of passive rest; it is a conflict. It is a fight; but it is a fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12), and it is a successful fight." Not freedom from temptation, but victory over it. The law of sin is still with us. It was with Paul. He had to "keep his body under" (1 Cor. 9:27); when he would do good "evil was ever present with him" (Rom. 7:21), but he knew the secret of victory and applied it in his life. He tells about it in Rom. 8:2. That verse suggests the fight just mentioned. How apparent it is that if provision is made for the flesh the "law of sin" will become strong and the old man's victory easy; but if we follow Paul's advice and "make no provision for the flesh," but the rather for

the "things of the Spirit," the "law of the Spirit of His life" within us becomes strong and the new man's victory assured. And as we go on growing thus from day to day the victory becomes easier as we go. It is but natural that it should. Victory we may have all along the way, but temptation itself loses its power for the man of holiness who is "growing up in all things in Him." Are you growing?

"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ; TILL WE ALL COME UNTO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD, UNTO A FULL GROWN MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST; *that we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but dealing truly in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."*—Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, Chapter 4.

THE TYPE OF GROWTH

"Till we all come unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."—EPH. 4:13.

HAVING spoken at some length of the Christian's growth and development, I wonder if the thought has not already been present with many of you concerning the type or goal of this development. It is the purpose of these closing words to set it before you, for I am sure,

> "If thou couldst in vision see
> Thyself, the man God meant,
> Thou never more couldst be
> The man thou art, content."

In this marvelous passage of Paul's, taken from his Ephesian letter, there is doubtless an immediate reference to the perfection in Jesus Christ of the church as a whole, yet the church can only come to the stature of a fullgrown man, as the individuals who compose it are likewise perfected in the graces that belong to Christian character. And so we have here set before us the type of character, the whereunto

the Christian is to grow. He is to develop into the likeness of Christ. Christ is the type of growth.

You have all read Hawthorne's "Legend of the Stony Face," how the Great Spirit left his image upon a rock and went away promising to return at a future time, and how one Indian gazed upon that face by day and dreamed about it by night until his own face began to bear its likeness; and one day when the tribe had ceased from war and its spiritual vision had become clear, they recognized in him the Great Spirit who had come back to earth in this waiting prophet's soul.

Something like that Paul says is to be true of the real child of God. This is what he says: "We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror (and this certainly is the original) the glory of the Lord (and by glory is meant character), are changed into the same image from character to character" (2 Cor. 3:18). Does this mean that we are eventually to become, each one, another Christ? No, and yes. An image is a likeness. There is nothing here of Hindoo absorption; nothing of identification or of equality; nothing of this modern deification of man that would make him, in a meas-

ure, through sacrificial toil, a savior of the world in the same sense with the atoning Christ; but an expression of the transforming influence of the devout contemplation of the moral beauty and glorious goodness of the Son of God. We are to be like Christ; we are so to partake of His character that when the world sees us, though it be at the trivial round and common task, it will say, "Tell us of the Christ whose glory you so reflect."

And still in a very proper sense we are to be ourselves Christs; and here, after all, we are going to discover the real secret of our likeness to Him. Christ, as it were, has been reincarnated in every Christian, however poorly some of us represent Him. At the moment of the new birth, Christ takes up His abode in the believer's soul and the individual is no more himself but Jesus Christ; all the rest of life is a continual denial of himself and an assertion of the Christ within, and all the supreme loveliness of character is but the expression of the perfect man within. When Augustin, who had lived in profligacy, gave himself to Christ, he renounced his former evil associations. One day, when going down the streets of Carthage, he met the woman who had been his fascina-

tion in the sinful life and ran from her. She cried and said, "Why do you run, Augustin? It is I." And Augustin shouted back, "I run because I am not I." "Martin Luther," said the great reformer, "does not live here; Jesus Christ lives here," and a greater one than Luther long ago said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Blessed be God such a transformation is possible. And the assertion of Christ in a believer's being involves the reproduction of Christ in a believer's life; having the same mind and disposition with Christ in all things, that this world, in taking note of the Christian's daily walk and conversation, will recognize that Christ has come back to earth in another Christian soul.

Of course it is very important to have a noble ideal and an ambition to attain it. We have not meant to ignore this truth, although we have been studying the attainment of character from another viewpoint, and there is no ideal so completely worthy to be set before the human soul as that presented in the character of Jesus Christ; neither can there be any nobler aspiration than the ambition to be so Christ-like in the deportment of one's life, that as you go through the world, the sad and

weary souls of earth will see Christ in you and bless God for sending you into their midst. But when once the character of Jesus is set before us in all its unblemished loveliness, is it any wonder we despair of ever attaining an ideal like unto that? But who has been emphasizing ideals? We've been talking about a type, and there's all the difference in the world between an ideal and a type. We spoke about the reproduction of Christ in life, but not as anything a poor, weak, human soul might do. We'll have to consider the lilies again, how they grow. How do they grow? How does an acorn become an oak? Not by trying, but by allowing the oak-life within it its own natural development, and so the Christian's Christ-likeness does not result from an effort of the human soul to reproduce the character of Christ by imitating an ideal (though we do not disparage imitation), but by allowing the Christ-life within him to reproduce itself. This is what is meant in the scientific world by "Conformity to Type."

You know what protoplasm is: it's the basis of all life; it's the clay from which the potter moulds his vessels; but did you know that all protoplasm is at least seemingly alike and that

if you took the first little speck of it and examined it under the highest powers of the microscope, you could not tell, though you were the most skilled scientist of earth, whether that little speck of structureless albuminous-like substance would develop into a man or an animal or a tree? In the embryo, as it first meets the eye, it is impossible to tell whether that into which it is to develop will fly in the air, or swim in the sea, or walk on the earth, or be fixed immovable in it. What then is it that makes the difference in the outgrowth of that protoplasmic germ? It is a strange something that has entered into it, and which is distinct from it, and which seizes upon it and moulds it into an image of itself; a different something for the plant, a different something for the animal, a different something for man and a different something for every different type belonging to them. What is this mysterious something? It is the *type determining life*, the potter who moulds the clay into an image of himself. "All life," says Paul, "is not the same life; there is one kind of life of men, another life of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds." This mysterious something, *which no eye can see and no science*

define, which enters the protoplasm of a tree is the tree-life; that which enters the protoplasm of a fish, the fish-life, and that which enters the protoplasm of a man, the man-life, and so on, and each of these protoplasmic germs must now, *according to its nature*, develop into an image of the particular life within it, the visible vegetable or animal being, as it were, but the incarnation of the invisible image stamped upon them in their germinal state and which by the very nature of things they cannot help but reproduce.

Is there now an analogy to this in the spiritual world? Is there another kind of life which, entering into the spiritual nature of man, begins to work itself out as a process of natural development? Yes, there is, and what that life is we have already seen. It is the Christ-life, and just as the man-life develops into the image of a man, so the Christ-life develops into the image of the Christ, making the man in his spiritual nature an exact reproduction of the Christ within him. Blessed be God, the Christian's Christ-likeness does not result from a series of feeble efforts to imitate an extraneous ideal, but comes from the spontaneous, automatic reproduction of an *inner life* which

is as natural as the quiet persistent growth of the enameled calyx from the lily bulb. If only the conditions of health are maintained there need be no anxiety about the image.

And what does it mean to be like Christ? Well, in plain terms, it means we'll be a good deal easier to get along with than some of us are now. In the home you'll be easier to live with; no longer be so awfully nice away from home and cross as a bear in your own house. That unruly temper that goes off with a hair-trigger will come under control and disappear. That thin-skinned sensitiveness, that is always getting its feelings hurt, will disappear, because the self-life will be crucified and a dead man isn't supposed to have any feelings. All that bitterness of heart and unforgiving spirit will take wings, and when you've buried your animosity you'll not spend any time putting flowers on its grave. That "good as anybody else, and a little better" feeling will give place to a becoming humility and you won't pride yourself on it when you get it either. There'll be a change in that life of worldliness that has caused people to wonder what the difference was any way between you and some others who never professed to be Christians.

But why particularize? Look at His transcendent character, the dazzling glory of His moral beauty, and think of growing up, as Paul says, in all things into Him! Think of being like Him—like Him in His sublime and unfaltering faith in the righteous purpose and power of the God of heaven to redeem the world though all the powers of hell be set against it; like Him in His cheerful obedience to His Father's will, though it wrung His soul with unspeakable agony to perform it; like Him in His self-forgetful earnestness that made His whole existence a continuous Calvary passion for His fellowmen; like Him in His infinite forgiveness that came from a heart without a grain of personal animosity even though His persecutors nailed Him, in their wrath, to the cross of His crucifixion; like Him in His tender compassion that sent His heart out with an infinite yearning to the poor and distressed and made His life a mission of mercy to the heirs of misfortune; like Him in His calm and gentle self-control, answering nothing though reviled and insulted by the brutal mob; like Him in His sweet humility that made the conscious Sovereign of the Universe, with all His supreme dignity, a little child among the men

of earth; and above all, like Him in the pure whiteness of His soul, which, though it came in contact with defilement, like the enameled lily, was never sullied by its touch. Like Him in all these and in all the other traits of His lovely character.

Well might one despair of ever attaining anything like such perfection of moral beauty if he were left to his own feeble effort after righteousness. To imitate such an ideal, how were it in any appreciable degree possible? But it's not imitation we're dwelling upon. It's something better than that. It's conformity to type. It is the Christ-life, the new man reproducing His image in the human soul. We are not to conform ourselves but we are to *be* conformed. The verbs in such passages are all in the passive voice. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to *be* conformed to the image of His Son." "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord we *are* transformed into the same image from glory to glory." "Put on the new man which *is renewed* in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." And once more the same apostle, for it is Paul who is saying all this, says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ *be*

formed in you." And what is all this but what we have been saying? that of ourselves we are insufficient to accomplish anything, but that it is the living Christ within whose workmanship we are and the beauty of whose holiness is upon us as He works within us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Somewhere I have read of an artist falsely accused and thrown into prison. His brushes and paint were allowed him, but he had no canvas. One day he asked a man in the corridor for something upon which he might paint, and the man indifferently picked up an old soiled handkerchief and tossing it to him said, "There, see what you can do with that," and the artist began to paint upon it the face of Jesus. The picture that he painted afterward became one of the famous paintings of the Master's face. He labored on it faithfully and when it was finished he showed it to the man and when he looked upon its marvelous sweetness it touched his heart and the tears flowed unbidden down. And as I recall the story the thought comes to me, if a poor artist could take an old soiled rag and so make it glow with the loveliness of Jesus that a careless, indifferent man could be touched into tears as he

looked upon it, what might not the glorious Christ do with my life if I would but allow Him to have His way with me to reproduce His likeness through me.

The best developments are always slow. Oaks do not grow up like mushrooms in a single night, and solid godly characters are not the products of a few months. It is a law in the natural world that the highest type of life develops most slowly, and as the spiritual is so much higher than the natural in man, why should we feel discouraged if the perfect character is not produced like the growth of an asparagus plant or like the maturity of a monad in the lower world. We must not forget that law of universal application, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." So let us live on, growing day by day "in grace and in the knowledge of Christ," remembering that when we have attained unto the best possible in this life, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but ever rejoicing in that when He shall appear the likeness shall be complete. Oh, sweet, transporting thought!

"I shall be like Him, wondrously like Him,
And in His beauty shall share."

Heaven after all is God's sample room of His

finished work. Suppose we are visiting a pottery, desirous of seeing the product of the establishment; we might be shown to the mixing-room where the clays are stirred together and on up to the molding-room where the vases and the various vessels take their shape in obedience to the will of the skillful artisan, but we would not have seen what the factory could really do until we had followed its varied processes clear up to the sample room, where the finished work stands in all its beauty and perfection. It is so with our growth in grace, with our conformity to the image of His Son, and though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Not long ago in England a young man, blinded in early youth by an accident, was married to a beautiful young lady. He was of high social position and in spite of his blindness had won honors at the university. He had courted and won his bride although he had never looked upon her face. He had undergone a course of treatment that gave the surgeon such encouragement as to make him confident of a favorable outcome, and they had

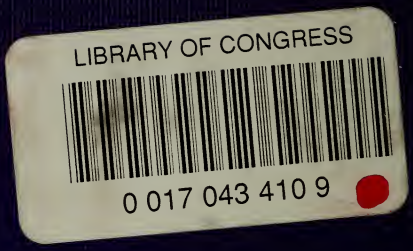
arranged the final test for the hour of the ceremony. The young man, his eyes still shrouded in linen, drove with his father, Sir William Hart Dyke, to the church. Miss Cave, the bride, came, leaning on her father's arm. So moved was she, she could not speak. Was her lover at last to see her face, the beautiful face that others admired but which he had known only through the delicate touch of his finger tips? She neared the altar as the soft strains of Lohengrin's wedding march floated through the building, and there beheld a strange scene. Sir William Hart Dyke stood there with his son and before them the great occulist just in the act of cutting away the bandage. The bandage fell. The young lover stood just a moment as if in the uncertainty of a dream. One step forward—a beam of rose-colored light fell into his face as it came shooting through the stained window of the cathedral, but he did not seem to see it. Did he see anything? Yes, before him was a face from which he could not tear his gaze, and as if just coming into consciousness of where he was, with a look of joy such as mortals scarcely ever know, he stepped forward to meet his bride. They looked into each other's eyes, and one would

have thought his own would never have wandered from her face. "At last?" she said, still in uncertainty. "At last, at last," he echoed, solemnly. "No longer through a glass darkly," says Paul, "but face to face," for I shall see Him as He is, and when I see Him as He is I shall be like Him. After all that I have been able to become here, and my life has not been altogether without victory, I have beheld, as in a mirror, the spotless beauty of my Christ, I have felt like crying, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," but oh, what a promise is this—"Changed into His own image from glory unto glory," and when at last I stand in His presence, full-statured and clear-eyed, that transformation will be complete—a heart like His and a face like His—and as I look with untrammeled vision into His eyes I shall see reflected back no longer my own deformity and imperfection, but I shall see an image like Him—for *when I see Him as He is I shall be like Him*.

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